Sustainable INL News

Meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs

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Carbon Footprint – What Does It Mean?

n 1985, the World Meteorological Society and the International Council of Scientific Unions met in Austria. They reported on the build-up of carbon dioxide and other "greenhouse gases" in the atmosphere and predicted global warming. That same year, the Antarctic ozone hole was discovered by British and American scientists.

Today, the debate over carbon dioxide emissions continues, and the term "carbon footprint" has enjoyed increasing popularity. The generally accepted definition of carbon footprint, also referred to as greenhouse gas inventory, is the total amount of Greenhouse Gases produced to directly and indirectly support human activities, usually expressed in equivalent tons of carbon dioxide. There can be a myriad of sources for carbon emissions including electricity production, heating with fossil fuels, transportation, production of goods and other

industrial and agricultural processes.

There are different ways to measure an entity's carbon footprint, but the most comprehensive method is using life-cycle assessment, an internationally standardized method for the evaluation of the environmental burdens and resources consumed along

INL is finalizing its own carbon footprint in order to identify major emission sources, set programmatic goals and implement actions to work towards carbon neutrality. Preliminary numbers indicate that INL emits just over 100,000 metric tons of CO₂ equivalent. In February 2010, the Secretary of Energy set a

"Everybody talks about the weather, but nobody does anything about it."

-Mark Twain

the life cycle of products, from the extraction of raw materials, manufacture of goods, use by final consumers, recycling, energy recovery and ultimate disposal.

Why should we be concerned with INL's carbon footprint? The process of calculating a carbon footprint supports research in carbon management science, technology, and policy; is part of a commitment to sustainability; helps us to better understand climate risk and carbon legislation; and avoids costs through efficiency gains.

reduction goal of 28% by 2020 for all DOE facilities.

Reducing our carbon footprint can be simple acts

such as riding a bus, use of hybrid vehicles in fleet, teleconferencing, recycling and energy efficiency. It is equally important while striving for carbon neutrality, to do so without compromising scientific or operational endeavors.

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We're on the Web! www.inl.gov/sustainable



An employee who rides the INL bus to work at the Site each day puts about one-fourth of the amount of carbon dioxide in the air as compared with a worker who rides in a private vehicle with one other person to make the same trip.

